



DECISION OF THE MANAGEMENT BOARD LAYING DOWN IMPLEMENTING RULES FOR THE DESIGNATION OF TOPIC CENTRES AS PART OF THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT INFORMATION AND OBSERVATION NETWORK ('EIONET') FOR THE PERIOD 2027-2030

THE MANAGEMENT BOARD OF THE EUROPEAN ENVIRONMENT AGENCY

HAVING REGARD to Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 April 2009 on the European Environment Agency (hereinafter referred to as 'the EEA') and the European Environment Information and Observation Network (hereinafter referred to as 'Eionet') (codified version) amended on 9 July 2021, in particular Article 4, paragraphs (4) to (6) thereof,

HAVING REGARD to the Decision of the Management Board of the EEA of 22 November 2019 (Decision EEA/MB/2019/020) on the Financial Rules applicable to the Budget of the European Environment Agency, in particular Articles 81 and 89 to 91 thereof on forms of EEA contributions, procurement procedures and grants which refer to Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 23 September 2024 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (recast),

HAVING REGARD to the Decision of the Management Board at its 102nd meeting on 13 June 2024 (MB Decision EEA/MB/2024/016) to initiate the process leading to the designation by the Management Board of new European Topic Centres and to establish a Management Board Advisory Committee to provide input and guidance to the design process, as amended on 21 February 2025 (MB Decision EEA/MB/2025/004),

HAVING REGARD to the Decision of the Management Board at its 105th meeting on 18 June 2025 (MB Decision EEA/MB/2025/012) to initiate a first phase to test the new model for the establishment of a list of Topic Centres with volunteering EEA member countries with the support of the EEA to assess the operationalisation of the identification process, and the EEA to report back on its findings to inform the Management Board meeting in December 2025,

HAVING REGARD to the Decision of the Management Board at its 107th meeting on 4 December 2025 on the designation of Topic Centre organisations from the volunteering EEA member countries thereby establishing the list of Topic Centres (MB Decision EEA/MB/2025/030,

WHEREAS:

- (1) Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 establishes that Topic Centres are part of Eionet and that they can be entrusted with the task of cooperating with the EEA on specific tasks.
- (2) The Management Board recognises the necessity to update the way in which Topic Centres are designated in order to better attract the expertise needed to support the tasks of the EEA as listed in Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009.
- (3) The Management Board acknowledges that the financial arrangements for successfully carrying out the tasks entrusted to the Topic Centres should allow for flexibility and agility while ensuring continuity.
- (4) For reasons of securing strong engagement and community in Eionet, the Management Board recognises the need to ensure a level of trust amongst and towards Topic Centres. To

that end, organisations pursuing objectives fundamentally in conflict with the objective and activities of the EEA and Eionet, such as some commercial organisations and organisations having an advocacy profile, do not fit with the role of a Topic Centre and should therefore not be designated as one.

- (5) The present implementing rules are an instrument of governance meant to provide a general framework for transparently and efficiently establishing and managing Topic Centres. They should be supplemented by the EEA's guidance setting out the processes for the identification, designation, and contracting of Topic Centres, including forms and checklists. To ensure transparency and visibility, the present implementing rules should be attached to the calls for expressions of interest for the inclusion of new organisations on the list of Topic Centres to be launched and advertised by the EEA on its website.

HAS DECIDED TO ADOPT THESE IMPLEMENTING RULES

Article 1

Organisations identified by the EEA member countries

1. The organisations identified by the EEA member countries who could become Topic Centres, for the period 2027-2030, in accordance with Article 2 shall meet the following criteria:
 - (a) They must carry out scientific and/or technical support tasks listed in Article 2 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 in the priority areas of work of the EEA referred to in Article 3(2) of that Regulation and/or in line with the EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030;
 - (b) They must be legal entities having their headquarters or registered office in an EEA member country, whose activities support the objective of the EEA and of Eionet as laid down in Article 1(2) of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009;
 - (c) They must possess relevant and demonstrated expertise in one or several of the priority areas of work referred to in Article 3(2) of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009;
 - (d) They must have the capacity to operate in Eionet as referred to in Articles 1 and 4 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 and the capacity to undertake the types of tasks referred to in Article 4(2) of these Implementing Rules which may be entrusted to them by the EEA.
2. The organisations identified by the EEA member countries shall forward to the EEA by the deadline set in the relevant call for expressions of interest their names and details, evidence that they comply with the criteria set out in paragraph 1, and details of their specific fields of expertise by reference to the tasks to be entrusted listed in Article 4(2) and the thematic and transverse areas listed in the Annex.

In cases where it is a specific part of the identified organisation, which has the ability and the capacity to operate in Eionet and perform the tasks that may be entrusted to them by the EEA, this shall be stipulated by the organisation.

Article 2

Maintaining the list of Topic Centres

1. The EEA shall ensure that organisations identified by the EEA member countries comply with the criteria set out in Article 1(1). Where necessary, the organisations identified by the EEA member countries shall be asked to add to the evidence referred to in the first subparagraph of Article 1(2).

2. The Management Board or Executive Director may request the Scientific Committee, referred to in Article 10 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009, to provide advice on whether there is an overall match between the organisations identified by the EEA member countries, on the one hand, and the capacities sought to perform efficiently the tasks referred to in Article 4 and the EEA-Eionet Strategy 2021-2030, on the other hand.
3. Upon validation of the identified organisations by the EEA in accordance with paragraph 1, the Management Board shall on the basis of a proposal from the Executive Director designate the Topic Centres, including the overview of their specific fields of expertise. The first list of Topic Centres was established by the Management Board on 4 December 2025 following a call for expressions of interest launched by the EEA on 29 August 2025.
4. The list of Topic Centres designated in accordance with the procedure under paragraph 3 (hereinafter referred to as 'the list') shall be updated regularly, and at least once per year, by launching calls for expressions of interest prompted either by the EEA Management Board acting on its own accord or on the basis of a proposal from the Executive Director. Substantial changes to a Topic Centre on the list shall require the approval of the EEA Management Board. Changes to the specific fields of expertise are not considered substantial changes.
5. The list shall be publicly available on the EEA's website.
6. The Executive Director shall by 31 December 2028 and thereafter regularly provide the Management Board with an update on the procedure and criteria leading to the establishment of the list of Topic Centres, including details on the activities of the Topic Centers on the list during the preceding period and a description of the tasks entrusted to the Topic Centres in the EEA's consolidated annual activity report (CAAR).

Article 3

Responsibilities as part of Eionet

In accordance with subparagraph 3 of Article 4(4) of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009 the Topic Centres on the list shall cooperate with other institutions which form part of Eionet. Responsibilities of Eionet cooperation shall include, but are not limited to:

- (a) Supporting the transition of Eionet into a more flexible and innovative knowledge network, connecting better the strong country-level expertise to the European level;
- (b) Supporting the transition of Eionet towards a stronger learning and capacity building network organisation;
- (c) Contributing to enhancing connectivity between experts and policymakers by strengthening the science-policy interface;
- (d) Strengthening communication efforts at both national and European level.

Article 4

Tasks to be entrusted to Topic Centres on the list

1. Without prejudice to the fulfilment of its objective and performance of its tasks pursuant to Regulation (EC) No 401/2009, the EEA may entrust tasks to the Topic Centres on the list which involve

them providing it with scientific and technical support in the thematic and transverse areas specified in the Annex.

2. The tasks which may be entrusted to the Topic Centres on the list, either to one Topic Centre or to several working together, are the following:

(a) Reporting services:

- i. Contribute to routine quality checking, and supporting aggregation of data after submission, including assisting data reporters;
- ii. Support the preparation of dataflows, including translating legal acts into specifications for data flow tools in Reportnet, contribute to documentation of dataflows and provide support to designing and testing quality checks;
- iii. Support continuous improvement by providing recommendations, as well as contributing to simplification and efficiency initiatives for specific legislative reporting obligations;

(b) Data services:

- i. Contribute to EEA routine data processing and analytical capabilities;
- ii. Enhance the interoperability, efficiency, integration and optimisation of EEA data and information platforms, including through application of relevant methodologies and standards. Strengthen data services through innovation and application of new methodologies such as Artificial intelligence (AI) and digital twins;
- iii. Design and improve data visualisation and/or distribution tools, including dashboards on EEA web services and for information systems;

(c) Knowledge services:

- i. Interlink and synthesise knowledge across multiple environmental thematic areas and socio-economic dimensions to underpin cross-cutting, systemic or integrated assessments. Factors may include risks, resilience, and societal preparedness;
- ii. Prepare assessments on Europe's climate and environment including on drivers, state, impacts, policy responses and sustainability transitions;
- iii. Harvest and/or apply the results of research to translate or transform to policy relevant information;
- iv. Support projections, strategic foresight and outlooks;

(d) Network and collaboration services:

- i. Strengthen EEA collaboration with Eionet member and cooperating countries. Provide support for capacity building, training, performance bench-marking as well as preparation for enlargement. Cover geographical areas identified in the EEA's strategy for cooperation with third countries and international organisations;
- ii. Strengthen connection with science/research capacities to improve diffusion of results and support to policy development and EEA services;
- iii. Support communication activities as well as the EEA's networking and outreach efforts to stakeholders, including to business and civil society.

Article 5
Financial arrangements

1. The EEA may, in accordance with Article 5 of Regulation (EC) No 401/2009, agree with the Topic Centres on the list upon the necessary financial arrangements for successfully carrying out the tasks entrusted to them.
2. Calls for tenders or calls for proposals shall be launched in accordance with the procedures foreseen in the EEA Financial Regulation.
3. The financial arrangements shall take the form of contracts or grants awarded in accordance with the EEA's financial regulation laid down in Decision EEA/MB/2019/020 of 22 November 2019, in particular Articles 81 and 89 to 91 thereof on forms of EEA contributions, procurement procedures and grants which refer to the general Financial Regulation laid down in Regulation (EU, Euratom) 2024/2509 of 23 September 2024 (recast), and to Regulation (EC) No 401/2009.

Article 6
Review

The EEA shall ensure that the tasks it entrusts to the Topic Centres are properly carried out. To that end, the Executive Director shall, by 31 December 2029, submit a report to the Management Board, reviewing the procedure and criteria leading to the establishment of the list of Topic Centres.

Article 7
Delegation

The power to adapt the tasks to be entrusted to designated Topic Centres as listed in Article 4(2) and the thematic and transverse areas listed in the Annex with a view to aligning them with the yearly Single Programming Document is delegated to the Bureau.

Article 8
Entry into force

These Implementing Rules shall enter into force on 4 December 2025.

Approved by the EEA Management Board at its 107th meeting
on 4 December 2025

Signed

André Weidenhaupt
Chair, EEA Management Board



Annex – Thematic and transverse areas

Thematic areas:

Agriculture and food system
Air emissions
Air quality
Biodiversity
Buildings Systems
Carbon removals
Chemicals
Circular economy
Climate and health
Climate change impacts, vulnerability and risks
Climate change mitigation: reducing emissions
Climate change resilience and adaptation
Climate mitigation in the land sector
Energy systems
Finance and economics
Fisheries and aquaculture
Forests and forestry
Freshwater
GHG monitoring, reporting and verification
Health Impacts and inequalities
Industrial accidents
Industry
Land use
Marine environment
Maritime sectors
Mobility Systems
Noise
Offshore renewable energy
One Health
Ozone depleting substances and F gases
Soil
Urban
Waste

Transverse areas:

8th EAP and indicators
Artificial intelligence
Broader sustainability issues
Digital transition / transformation
Earth observation
Foresight
Geospatial
Governance
Just and fair transitions
Skills strengthening
Europe's environment 2025
General¹

¹ The purpose of 'General' is for organisations to identify willingness to provide support for the different categories of tasks in Article 4(2) where this support would not be for any of the thematic or transversal areas listed.